NCA
VOC FOR IOP/FN
NEWS ANALYSIS NO. 1-1714 OCTOBER 27, 1976
CHARLES MEDD

ELECTION '76: FORD VS. CARTER ON DOMESTIC ISSUES

ANNCR:

IN THEIR FINAL TELEVISED DEBATE, GERALD FORD AND JIMMY CARTER ANSWERED MORE THAN ONE DOZEN QUESTIONS, ALL BUT ONE OF THEM DEALING WITH DOMESTIC PROBLEMS. MOST OBSERVERS AGREE THAT NEXT WEEK'S ELECTION WILL BE DECIDED BY DOMESTIC ISSUES, AN AREA WHERE THE TWO CANDIDATES DIFFER THE MOST, AS CHARLES MEDD POINTS OUT.

VOICE:

WHILE THE DISENCHANTED VOTER MAY SAY IT DOESN'T MAKE MUCH DIFFERENCE WHO WINS NEXT TUESDAY, THE CHANCES ARE HE'S WRONG. WHATEVER THE AMERICAN PUBLIC THINKS ABOUT GERALD FORD AND JIMMY CARTER, IT'S CLEAR THAT THIS YEAR'S CANDIDATES HAVE VERY DIFFERENT IDEAS AS TO WHICH DIRECTION THIS COUNTRY SHOULD BE LED IN THE NEXT FOUR YEARS. AND THE REAL DIFFERENCE IS FOUND IN DOMESTIC MATTERS, ONES THAT USUALLY COUNT THE MOST ON ELECTION DAY.

BOTH MEN AGREE THAT UNEMPLOYMENT AND INFLATION ARE THE TWO MOST BURNING ISSUES, BUT AGREEMENT STOPS THERE. PRESIDENT FORD BELIEVES THE GOVERNMENT CANNOT CREATE MORE JOBS WITHOUT CREATING MORE INFLATION, AND HE WOULD RELY LARGELY ON PRIVATE INDUSTRY TO PUT AMERICANS BACK TO WORK. MISTER CARTER, HOWEVER, BELIEVES THAT UNEMPLOYMENT CONTRIBUTES TO INFLATION BECAUSE OF ITS HIGH SOCIAL COSTS, AND HE PROMISES GOVERNMENT ACTION TO STIMULATE JOBS.

ON TAXES, MISTER FORD SAYS HE WANTS TO LOWER THEM FOR THE MIDDLE CLASS, THOSE EARNING BETWEEN EIGHT AND THIRTY THOUSAND

DOLLARS A YEAR. HIS DEMOCRATIC OPPONENT CALLS THE ENTIRE TAX STRUCTURE A "DISGRACE" BECAUSE IN HIS WORDS IT FAVORS THE RICH OVER THE POOR, AND HE PROMISES A COMPLETE BUT UNSPECIFIED OVERHAUL.

BOTH MEN AGREE THERE'S A LOT WRONG WITH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, BUT DO NOT, OF COURSE, AGREE ON THE REMEDIES. THE PRESIDENT SAYS THE GOVERNMENT IS TOO BIG AND MUCH TOO EXPENSIVE, AND HE WANTS TO LIMIT, IF NOT REDUCE, COSTLY PROGRAMS ADMINISTERED IN WASHINGTON. MISTER CARTER, HOWEVER, SAYS THE WHOLE SYSTEM IS A "MESS" AND NEEDS RESTRUCTURING, INCLUDING THE MERGER OF SOME FEDERAL AGENCIES AND THE ELIMINATION OF OTHERS. ON THE GENERAL SUBJECT OF WHAT'S WRONG WITH WASHINGTON, MISTER CARTER SAYS THE FAULT LIES WITH THE REPUBLICAN WHITE HOUSE, WHILE THE PRESIDENT, QUITE NATURALLY, BLAMES THE DEMOCRATIC CONGRESS.

THE LIST GOES ON: NATIONAL HEALTH INSURANCE, LEGISLATION TO CONTROL HANDGUNS, BLANKET PARDONS FOR VIETNAM WAR DRAFT RESISTERS -- EACH FAVORED BY CARTER, AND OPPOSED BY FORD. THE ESSENTIAL DIFFERENCES GO BEYOND THE SEPARATE ISSUES AND ARE FOUND IN WHAT THE TWO MEN SEE AS THE PROPER ROLE OF GOVERNMENT AND THOSE ELECTED TO GOVERN. AS DO MOST REPUBLICANS, PRESIDENT FORD BELIEVES THAT INDIVIDUALS SUFFER WHEN THEIR GOVERNMENT BECOMES TOO BIG AND THAT NO LEADER SHOULD PROMISE MORE THAN HE CAN REALISTICALLY DELIVER. AND LIKE MOST DEMOCRATS, JIMMY CARTER IS OPTIMISTIC ABOUT WHAT GOVERNMENT CAN DO AND SAYS ACTIVE LEADERSHIP IS NEEDED TO SOLVE NATIONAL PROBLEMS.

WITH ONLY A FEW DAYS TO GO BEFORE THE ELECTION, MANY AMERICANS SEEM UNSURE ABOUT WHICH LEADER THEY WANT, IN SPITE OF -- OR PERHAPS BECAUSE OF -- THE VASTLY DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS THE CANDIDATES WANT TO TAKE THEM.

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